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WITH KEITH WALL

Contentment *in* Turbulent Times

Eight Keys to Lasting Inner Peace



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Eight Keys to Lasting Inner Peace*
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Foreword

Dear Reader:

It's just like God to arrange for the book you have in your hand to be a gift to our family as well. You see, we have also experienced turbulent times and are learning what it means to be content after the events of July 4, 2025.

It was a lovely summer day in the Pacific Northwest. As is our tradition, the Jantz family enjoyed a beautiful, bright Fourth of July together as we watched our local parade, barbecued, and enjoyed resting in the sun. It was a day to reflect on God's goodness to us in giving us health, family, and freedom—including the opportunity to worship Him with no constraints.

At dusk, as Gregg started to move his convertible into the lower garage of our home, the unthinkable happened. Attempting to back the car down the steep driveway, tires on one side of the vehicle hooked onto

a retaining wall, flipping the convertible. Help arrived quickly, but ultimately Gregg succumbed to his injuries. It was clear he died peacefully, and Jesus very simply came and escorted him home so mercifully.

It still seems surreal that Gregg—husband, father, brother, son, and friend—has left this world for an eternity with Jesus, the One he loved and served. It is because of Jesus that Gregg desired to serve others. He sought to understand and care for those affected by this fallen world as they coped with abuse, trauma, and hurt. Gregg's life's work and mission—The Center • A Place of Hope, located on the Puget Sound in Edmonds, Washington—continues this calling each day.

If you are holding this book, you, too, may be searching for contentment in your own turbulent times. Perhaps you have looked for it in places that have not brought lasting peace. We, the Jantz Family, want you to know that there is real hope of finding peace amid your turmoil and darkest moments, even when it feels impossible.

As you begin this book, no matter where you are in your journey, Gregg would remind you that you can embrace this challenge with hope. With God in it and alongside you, may you find lasting peace and healing.

THE JANTZ FAMILY
EDMONDS, WA, MAY 2026



INTRODUCTION

The Quest for Contentment

If you were asked to choose one word to describe the times we live in, what would it be? You might say *stressful*, *intense*, or *exhausting*. As for me, I'm going with the adjective *turbulent*. If you've ever flown in a plane that encountered turbulence, you're acquainted with the meaning of the word. Intense winds cause the aircraft to rise and plunge, and in response, your adrenaline soars, your stomach lurches, and your heart pounds.

That's an accurate description of what most of us have experienced in recent years as we've endured global crises, political upheavals, and social unrest. But those events are often in addition to the personal struggles so many of us are already facing: financial hardship, relational difficulties, the challenges of parenting, job uncertainty, medical crises, or a loved one's terminal illness. The list of turbulence-makers could go on.

Let's also add another word to this discussion, one that we desperately need in these turbulent times: *contentment*. This is the quality of inner peace, calm, and serenity that holds us steady through jarring ups and downs. Is it truly possible to experience contentment amid modern life's uncertainty and turmoil? Absolutely!

As a mental health professional for forty years, I have counseled thousands of people struggling with depression, anxiety, addiction, and many other afflictions. Those willing to invest themselves in the healing process experienced deep-down contentment that had been missing from their lives. And so can you.

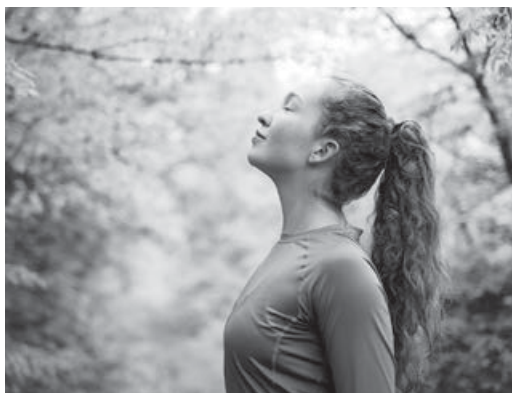
| The Truth About Contentment

Wouldn't it be wonderful if you could wake up each morning with enthusiasm, go through your day with satisfaction, engage in your work with a sense of purpose, interact with your loved ones joyfully, and sleep peacefully throughout the night? This can be your reality—not occasionally, but every day. As you begin your quest, three foundational points are essential to understand: (1) contentment is an inside job, (2) contentment is a learned skill, and (3) contentment is an achievable goal.

1. Contentment Is an Inside Job

Many people long for inner peace but don't achieve it because they're looking in the wrong places. If you're seeking anything external, beyond yourself, to bring contentment, you'll be searching forever. Contentment comes from within you—always. True contentment has nothing to do with what you have or don't have. Proof lies in the fact that unhappy people are found on every rung of the economic ladder. Genuine contentment has everything to do with emotional and spiritual well-being, and it is not dependent upon any possession, job title, or investment portfolio.

Contentment is shaped by how we choose to perceive our experiences, focus on gratitude, and cultivate peace amid challenges. No matter how turbulent the outside



world may be, a content heart remains steady, grounded in self-awareness and a positive mindset. By nurturing our internal world, we find that lasting contentment is possible, regardless of what life throws our way.

2. Contentment Is a Learned Skill

Since I was raised in a Scripture-reading home, I have always admired the perspective shared by the apostle Paul: “I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want” (Philippians 4:11–12).

Contentment develops through intentional choices and a commitment to personal growth. It doesn't come naturally or easily; it's cultivated through mindful decisions to understand who God created us to be and mindful decisions to seek meaning beyond material success. As we continually pursue the deeper matters of life—such as purpose, connection, and inner peace—we adapt our mindset and strive to find joy even in life's challenges. Over time, we gradually shift our perspective from dissatisfaction to fulfillment. Contentment becomes not just an emotion but a way of being.

3. Contentment Is an Achievable Goal

Though it may seem elusive in a world filled with strife and stress, contentment is an achievable goal. The constant barrage of challenges—from global conflicts and societal pressures to the personal struggles we face in our daily lives—can easily lead to feelings of discontent. We are often conditioned to believe that contentment will come only after certain milestones are reached: a resolution in the latest political upheaval, financial security, career success, or perfect relationships.

But this external approach to contentment is misguided, because life is unpredictable, and the things we often rely on for happiness can disappear or be taken away. By shifting our focus inward, we begin to see that contentment is less about what happens to us and more about how we respond. Choosing gratitude, for example, allows us to appreciate what we already have rather than constantly striving for what we lack. Even in the face of stress and

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challenges, there are moments of beauty and blessings that bring a deep sense of satisfaction and peace.

Contentment doesn't mean living without ambition or growth; it means finding peace along the journey instead of waiting for the destination to bring happiness. We can continue to set goals and work toward better circumstances, but we do so with a sense of inner balance and acceptance of where we are today. This mindset removes the pressure to constantly achieve more and allows us to appreciate the present moment, even as we pursue future aspirations.



Contentment is the anchor that keeps us grounded in turbulent times, a source of inner peace that enables us to navigate life's uncertainties with grace. Let's walk this journey together as I share with you insights and strategies I have gleaned in my mental health practice. As we explore the key ingredients needed to achieve contentment, you will take solid steps toward a life overflowing with joy, peace, and fulfillment.



KEY 1

Know Yourself

A favorite cartoon of mine features three friends sipping coffee in a café, when one fellow says, “How can we know who we are when the best marketing consultants of our time don’t know?” Humor aside, the question does bring to light the truth that many people don’t have a good understanding of themselves. It’s also true that a large percentage don’t even try. We often plow ahead in our everyday lives without pausing to think, reflect, ponder, and soul-search.

Contentment begins by looking inward, reflecting on who we truly are and what we deeply desire. It requires us to connect with our emotional and spiritual life, so we can understand our strengths and limitations and distinguish the values that guide us. When we recognize our unique purpose and place in this world, we begin to align ourselves with the person God created us to

be. As we embrace this inner journey, we find that true fulfillment doesn't come from circumstances but from living authentically, grounded in our faith and connected to the deeper calling on our life. Through this process, contentment becomes a natural outflow of knowing ourselves and our Creator.

| Why We Avoid Introspection

So let me ask: How long has it been since you spent a half hour in quiet reflection? When was the last time you set aside thirty minutes to contemplate the big and small issues of your life? I've often wondered why it is so tempting to focus our attention almost exclusively outside ourselves. I know the excuses I regularly come up with, and I know the ones I've heard repeatedly in my counseling office. Let's explore some of them here.

"I'm Too Busy"

Our daily responsibilities often include more than we can reasonably accomplish. We have errands to run, dishes to wash, deals to make, reports to write, lawns to mow, and bills to pay. If we somehow manage to get these done, we might try to sneak in a little time for our hobbies. We need to stay in shape, too, so we prioritize keeping up with our fitness routine. Should we ever

complete our to-do lists, dozens of other tasks will immediately materialize. The matter of spending regular time in quiet reflection competes against the tyranny of the urgent.

“I’d Rather Be Entertained”

Many people complain about a lack of time but fill the empty spaces in their lives with mental white noise. They surf the internet endlessly, binge-watch shows, and check social media continually. Day and night, countless streaming services, apps, games, podcasts, and websites allow us to access news, movies, sporting events, weather forecasts, stock market reports, and information about any other item of interest or worry that crosses our minds. With all the drama and intrigue available to us, who wants to sit around and contemplate? Unfortunately, one of our least listened-to channels is the one broadcast from our hearts, where authenticity is formulated and the weightiest decisions are made.

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“It’s Too Vague”

As a society, we’ve become conditioned to be as industrious as possible. We assume that if a task isn’t productive in a practical, tangible way, it must be a waste of time. If it doesn’t make us money, advance our career, or win friends and influence people, why bother? We assume that something as vague as internal reflection won’t contribute to the bottom line. However, I’m quite sure our headlong pursuit of fortune and acclaim will not help us find abundant life. We can get to the place where we are making tons of money and are surrounded by people who are impressed with our status and power; and we still feel empty, lost, and alienated. That’s because achieving these superficial goals often comes at the cost of sacrificing our real selves, which can only be found when we take time to look inward.



“It Sounds Boring”

Spending quiet time getting to know yourself may sound boring, but the truth is that no external situation can match the internal world of self-reflection with all its color, texture, and richness. We have a powerful capacity for feeling and thinking, imagining and sensing. Learning to make contact with the deeper aspects of ourselves will allow us to experience the most dynamic, soul-saving, and life-changing series of events we have ever known. Becoming better acquainted with our internal world will give depth to our spiritual life, enhance our relationships, replenish our energy, and boost our creativity. So much for boring!

“It’s Too Risky”

Many people shy away from introspection because it could mean facing truths about themselves—behaviors, motivations, and regrets—that they might prefer to ignore. They may discover that aspects of their career aren’t in alignment with their values, or that certain relationships or habits aren’t fulfilling. This awareness often comes with a responsibility to act, which can be daunting. Avoiding introspection allows us to stay in our comfort zones, even if it means remaining in situations that don’t truly satisfy us. By embracing introspection, we

may initially face discomfort, but we also gain the power to make choices that lead to a more meaningful life.

WHY WE AVOID INTROSPECTION

- “I’m too busy.”
- “I’d rather be entertained.”
- “It’s too vague.”
- “It sounds boring.”
- “It’s too risky.”

Which of these do you identify with the most, and why?

| Strategies for Knowing Yourself

When I speak of exploring your internal world, I’m not talking about an around-the-clock, introspective fanaticism. What I’m talking about is bringing balance to your life. Here are some practical strategies to help you uncover and understand your true self.



Keep a Journal

Journaling can help you reflect on your thoughts, emotions, and experiences. Try daily or weekly prompts such as, “What am I grateful for? What am I passionate about? What do I fear?” Journaling on a regular basis allows you to explore patterns in your thoughts and feelings and recognize the values that matter most to you.



Identify Strengths and Weaknesses

Take time to explore your strengths and weaknesses, as both reveal aspects of your true self. Use online personality assessments like the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) or CliftonStrengths to shed light on your natural tendencies. Also, ask trusted friends or family for feedback—they may identify strengths or areas for growth that you haven’t noticed.



Know What Energizes You

Notice activities that make you feel energized versus those that drain you. Reflect on what you love doing, even when no one is watching, as this often points to your passions and strengths. By engaging in what naturally excites you, you can uncover clues about your authentic self and where your true interests lie.



Ask Yourself “Why?”

Regularly ask yourself why you feel or react a certain way. If you're frustrated, disappointed, or excited, pause and dig deeper. Asking “Why?” can reveal hidden motivations, fears, or desires. Over time, this practice brings an understanding of what truly drives you.



Explore Past Patterns

Look back at pivotal moments or seasons in your life to identify patterns in your behavior, decisions, or desires. Consider when you felt fulfilled or unhappy, and analyze what contributed to those feelings. Reflecting on past experiences helps reveal what brings you joy, what you value, and what you may want to avoid in the future.





Pursue Spiritual Practices

For many, developing a relationship with God and discovering their God-given purpose are essential steps to self-understanding. Practices like prayer, reading the Bible, or participating in faith communities can foster a deeper sense of identity and purpose. Through spiritual exploration, you can gain insight into how your faith and beliefs shape who you are and how you approach life. (We'll explore this topic in greater detail in key 8.)



Read Every Day

Each morning, I read a chapter from the Bible and additional devotional material. This kind of reading causes me to think deeply, glean wisdom, and listen for God's voice speaking to me. Some people I know read poetry, classics, or philosophy with the same intent. Thoughtful reading has a way of leading you toward the center of yourself as you get more in touch with your thoughts and feelings.



Seek New Experiences

Trying new activities, hobbies, or social groups can help you discover and explore your true self. Stepping outside your comfort zone allows you to learn how you respond

in different situations, which can bring out hidden strengths, passions, and preferences. What experiences have you been longing to try? If you have put them off due to perceived limitations, perhaps it's time to revisit how you might accomplish them.



Knowing yourself is more than just an exercise in self-awareness; it's the beginning of deep-down contentment. By consistently applying the strategies we've discussed, you'll live more authentically, making choices that reflect your true self. This journey lays the foundation for a more fulfilled, joyful, and peaceful life, even amid the turbulent ups and downs of life.